



## State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Florida 2021



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2020 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$687,577
Forest Legacy	\$2,943,000
Forest Stewardship	\$160,717
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$688,000
State Fire Assistance	\$1,506,726
Urban and Community Forestry	\$860,340
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$424,145
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,270,505</b>

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

### Program Goals

- Cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the Florida Forest Service (FFS), the USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Programs emphasize forest sustainability and the production of commodity and amenity values such as wildlife, water quality, and environmental services.
- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural forests and related economies as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. These programs maximize cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

### Key Issues

- Florida continues to recover from the unprecedented timber damage caused by Hurricane Michael in October 2018. Due to the severity of damage, FFS crews provided immediate response and are still providing hurricane recovery operations. Over 2.8 million acres of forest were impacted, equating to 1.29 billion dollars in damaged resources and impacting approximately 16,000 private forest landowners. Forest recovery will take years.
- Florida began a first of its kind program this past summer with the Timber Recovery Block Grant in partnership with Florida Division of Emergency Management and FFS. The Hurricane Michael block grant was awarded \$380 million for private forest landowners who lost timber or producers with damage to center pivot irrigation systems. The program began accepting applications on August 21, 2020 and FFS Foresters have been actively engaged in certifying landowner needs prior to approval for payment.
- Florida is experiencing sustained population growth. The influx of new residents continues to increase wildland urban interface areas in the state. Increased use of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and the Community Assessor tool shows understanding of wildfire potential and the need for mitigation is becoming more mainstream. Inclusion of Community Wildfire Protection Plans into local mitigation strategies continues to expand across the state. Smoke management remains a critical issue.
- Prescribed fire in Florida is still a very robust management tool with an average of 2.3 million acres burned each year. In order to sustain and increase these numbers, Florida is implementing proactive improvements to its prescribed fire program including the use of the Air Quality Index (AQI) and new state of the art weather and smoke modeling programs.
- Two items that will affect wildfire activity this upcoming year are the impacted areas of Hurricanes Irma and Michael and the forecasted onset of La Niña conditions across the state. The amount of

vegetation that was brought down after the storms and the amount of the state that they impacted will provide increased fuel for potential wildfires. Dry conditions will limit fuel reduction burns increasing hazardous fuel loading.

- Florida's forests are continually threatened by the introduction and spread of invasive insects, pathogens, and non-native plants. The FFS works closely with partner agencies and organizations to detect new problematic non-native species, monitor their occurrence and impacts, develop and implement management methods, and communicate with the public about these issues.
- Florida's forests overall are sustainable across species and timber products with a statewide sustainability index (ratio of net timber growth to removals) of 2.07, even when the 10 counties impacted by Hurricane Michael are excluded. However, in some counties, especially for pine pulpwood, the sustainability index is below 1.0 (more pulpwood being removed than produced) due to high levels of industrial timber demand for pine pulpwood.
- Annual reforestation acres are about one half of what they were 25 years ago. There is a critical need for increased reforestation, especially incentives for private landowners, as competition from other land uses such as agriculture and urban development continue to impact Florida's forest's continued sustainability.
- A changing forest landowner base challenges FFS in providing the most effective outreach. Efficiency gains in landowner assistance include an innovative social media-based engagement tool, web-based outreach and education activities, the Florida Land Steward website, Land Management Calendar, and a Forest Stewardship & Landscape Scale Management Plan template. These accomplishments are the result of a continued strong partnership between the FFS, USFS, NRCS, FWC, Tree Farm, UF, TNC and others.
- Funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has given FFS the opportunity to continue administering a longleaf pine reforestation and stand improvement program for landowners across longleaf pine's historic range in Florida.
- Rapid urbanization, increased climatic fluctuations and powerful storms have led to decreased urban tree canopy and an increased risk of flooding in many communities. Florida's cities can better manage and restore their urban tree canopy by linking trees to existing programs for community resiliency and by developing an urban forest management plan. Urban Forestry Emergency Plans address potential disaster situations to help communities prepare for and recover from these canopy-altering events.
- FFS has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation's Community Tree Recovery Program and has provided ongoing assistance to the Florida counties most severely impacted by Hurricane Michael in 2018. Through funding provided by corporate sponsorships, FFS and the Arbor Day Foundation have hosted nine Community Tree Recovery events and have given away or planted 12,500 trees in the Hurricane Michael impact area to date. More events are planned.
- Trees provide key ecosystem services in their communities and urban tree programs advance the concept of sustainability. Trees are an essential resource helping cities become more livable by mitigating urban heat islands, keeping surface water free from pollutants and sediment and providing human health benefits to residents. Urban forest management is critical to restoring and protecting forest systems to maintain tree canopy and water quality.

## **Forest Facts and Accomplishments**

<b>Selected Facts</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>FY 2020 Accomplishments</b>	<b>Value</b>
Population	18,801,310	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	12,736
Acres of Forest Land	16,970,464	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	41,370
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	9,652,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	32,485
Number of NIPF Landowners	509,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	60
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	119
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	21,214,675	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	10,000
Number of Rural Fire Departments	525	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	1,989
Cities and Towns	411	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	197
Forest Based Employment	124,104	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	13,646,993
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	5	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	150,154
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	104,452,237		

## Program Highlights

### Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance continues to fund and support firefighting resources throughout Florida, including the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The Federal Excess Personal Property and Firefighter Property Programs assist Florida in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. This past year we acquired three trucks (valued at \$189,723), one grader (\$43,000), one low boy trailer (\$45,600), one small boat (\$12,136) and miscellaneous items such as shop tools, generators, compressors, storage lockers, power hand tools and metal (valued at \$678,541). In addition, the FFS administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments which, this past year, assisted 52 volunteer fire departments with purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment valued at over \$478,152. Through our mitigation and prevention grants, we successfully reduced the hazardous fuel load on over 31,734 acres and delivered 224 programs covering Firewise, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, "Ready, Set, Go," and wildfire prevention. Our number of in-person programs was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulted in the cancellation of many of our programs. We were able to accomplish some remote presentations in the Fall.

### Fire Adapted Communities

The FFS embraces the development of fire adapted communities (FACs) throughout the state that can withstand the otherwise devastating effects of wildfire impacts on communities in the wildland/urban interface (WUI). The concepts of FAC align well with existing local efforts, including the Local Mitigation Strategy, Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Action Plans, and Firewise Communities. The increased use of data from the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and the Community Assessor tool is an example of how these concepts are being used to make communities more fire adapted. The FFS also actively partners with our federal cooperators, fire departments, and other local stakeholders to successfully implement wildfire mitigation efforts, such as annual cleanup days, fireline installation and maintenance, and prescribed fire assistance on private, state and federal lands.

### Florida Forest Sustainability Report

The State of Florida recognizes the importance of sustainable forest management and the FFS is tracking a statewide sustainability index of Florida's forests. The revised 2017 Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data indicate that Florida's forests, overall, are sustainable across species and timber products with a statewide sustainability index of 2.07, after excluding 10 counties impacted by Hurricane Michael in October 2018. This indicates twice as much timber growth compared with timber removals.

### Florida's BMPs

Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) are forest land management guidelines designed as the minimum standards necessary for protecting and maintaining water quality and wetland ecosystems during forestry activities. Silviculture BMPs were first established in Florida in the mid 1970's and were adopted into Florida Administrative Code in February 2004 (Rule 5I-6). Currently, there are over 5.6 million acres enrolled in the Silviculture BMP program that include 2.75 million privately-owned acres and 2.85 million publicly-owned acres.

Wildlife BMPs: Adopted in October 2014 as Rule 5I-8 of the Florida Administrative Code, the Forestry Wildlife Best Management Practices for State Imperiled Species (WBMPs) were established so that applicants who properly implement WBMPs will no longer be required to obtain a permit authorizing the incidental take of State Imperiled Species during normal, ongoing forestry operations. Also, they will not be subject to any fines or penalties associated with an incidental take. Currently there are nearly 3.7 million acres enrolled in the Wildlife BMP program, 2.43 million acres of which are on privately-owned lands and nearly 1.25 million acres on publicly-owned lands.

Technical assistance for BMPs is provided by the Forest Hydrology Section primarily through site assessments, courtesy checks, and implementation surveys. BMP Foresters provided 152 technical assistance visits to private landowners. BMP training is another important aspect of Florida's BMP and WBMP programs and is presented via formal educational classes reaching Florida Master Loggers, consulting foresters, private and public land managers and forest landowners. Forest Hydrology Section staff presented 14 classes reaching 598 people during the past year.

### **Forest Health Protection**

The FFS Forest Health Section took an active role in surveys and assessments of the area impacted by Hurricane Sally. Following the initial damage estimates from remote methods, a ground assessment survey was conducted, with data collected at 453 locations across the region. Increased activity of Ips pine engraver beetles and other stress-related issues continued to be monitored in the region impacted by Hurricane Michael in 2018. The annual trapping and aerial surveys for southern pine beetle (SPB) activity were also conducted as usual, but no SPB activity was detected in the 2020 season. A total of 26 aerial surveillance flights have been flown logging over 9,900 miles during 57 hours of flight time. Total area surveyed for bark beetle surveillance flights is estimated at 22,000,000 acres.

The Southern Pine Beetle Assistance and Prevention Program, which is funded by the USFS Forest Health Protection Program, accepted 111 applications from non-industrial private landowners in 2020 to provide cost-share assistance and incentive payments to conduct preventative forest management practices on 6,987 acres. In the past year, the FFS Forest Health Section provided at least 240 assists in the form of pest identifications, disease diagnoses, and management recommendations to a wide range of private and public recipients throughout Florida. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a greater proportion of these assists were conducted remotely. When necessary, in-person field visits were conducted with appropriate PPE and limited personal contact.

### **Forest Inventory and Analysis**

The FFS partners with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program, the only nation-wide forest inventory system. The FFS based FIA crews collect inventory plot and other on-the-ground information, and then FFS works jointly with the USFS on preparing Florida's forest reports. The FIA program is widely recognized by forest products industry and environmental groups alike as "the source" for data driven timber and forest vegetation information. Florida's FIA program dates back to 1934, when the first forest inventory information was collected in the state. In the federal fiscal year 2020, Florida FIA crews collected information on 788 plots in 67 counties. The latest Florida forest inventory data posted on USFS websites is for 2017. Maintaining full federal and state support for the rigorous core FIA program, including forest inventories, analyses and reports, is one of the top priorities for the FFS.

### **Forest Legacy**

The FFS, through the federal Forest Legacy Program (FLP), realized several accomplishments over the course of federal fiscal year (FY) 2020. The FFS simultaneously continued working with partners and staff to move numerous ongoing Legacy grant-awarded projects forward to successful completion while meeting the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In November 2019, FFS closed on Wakulla Caves Forest, Caves Tract, a 717-acre property located in

Wakulla County. The property is now being managed as part of Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Park Service. The acquisition protects from impending development stemming from the greater Tallahassee area, a forested landscape pocketed with scenic and scientifically important karst features. The site is rich with cultural and historical resources and is part of the spring shed to the world's largest and deepest freshwater spring. Additionally, in November 2019, FFS submitted three projects to Washington DC for the FLP FY 2021 funding request: Wolfe Creek Forest, Tupelo Timberlands tract (1,724 acres, fee-simple), Wakulla Caves Forest, Legacy Tract (779 acres, fee-simple), and Welannee Watershed Forest, West Tract (2,348 acres, conservation easement).

In May 2020, FFS received an FLP FY 2020 acquisition grant award for the Welannee Watershed Forest, South Tract, in the amount of \$2,900,000.00. Throughout the Summer of 2020, staff worked with various partners and contractors to have three finalized and approved proposed projects ready for FY2022 grant award consideration: Rainbow Lakes Forest, Sandhill Tract (5,600 acres, fee-simple), Gulf Coastal Longleaf Initiative, Three Hollow Creek Tract (4,249 acres, conservation easement), and Wolfe Creek Forest, Springwater Blueway (7,868 acres, fee-simple).

### **Forest Stewardship**

The Florida Forest Stewardship outreach program responded to public meeting restrictions by shifting many landowner education and outreach activities that traditionally take place in-person to online webinars and meetings. The outreach program reached over 12,000 landowners through educational events and mailings including landowner workshops, property tours, webinars, land management e-mail newsletters, video meetings and Polycom conferences. The FFS and partners used these events to inform landowners about forest management practices and programs. Topics included invasive exotic plant control, integrating timber and wildlife management, longleaf pine restoration and management, prescribed fire, hurricane resiliency and recovery, succession and estate planning, growing timber revenue, BMPs for water quality and wildlife and forest plant identification. Recorded webinars and web courses will offer landowners and the public the continued opportunity to learn about sound forest management into the future.

### **Geospatial Technology**

The FFS has been in the process of transitioning to ArcGIS Pro/ArcGIS Online, as well as the Collector, Survey123 mobile apps. Training materials have also been developed for widespread virtual training for field staff. Working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, a Wildlife Best Management Practices Survey Mobile Form has been developed along with an ArcGIS Online Map with Survey Site Data for more efficient data collection in the field. A damage assessment analysis through GIS for Hurricane Sally contributed to summary report for FFS. For the LSR Hurricane Recovery project, Tall Timbers will be performing Airborne and Terrestrial LiDAR technologies to provide valuable insight into our LiDAR data needs for timber damage assessments.

### **Landowner Assistance**

The FFS and its partners offer landowners assistance through technical guidance and management planning as well as helping them to enroll in federal and state financial assistance programs for forest management. A variety of state-administered incentive programs have been delivered to landowners during the past year. FFS used grant funding from NFWF to help private non-industrial landowners establish or improve longleaf forestlands throughout the state. In 2020, this program provided 28 landowners with over \$104,000 in contract funding to treat or plant over 2,200 acres. Over 6,987 acres are being treated with funding from the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program. Two hundred eighty-seven landowners were provided technical assistance on 25,639 acres enrolled in the EQIP and CRP programs of the NRCS and FSA. County foresters prepared 1,025 plans for private landowners covering 63,717 acres.

The FFS has partnered with American Forest Foundation (AFF) to expand the successful Panhandle Landscape Scale Forest Management Plan (LMP) to the entire state, covering private landowners in all of Florida. The expanded plan was made available for use in December 2020. The FFS has also partnered with AFF to continue using their innovative landowner engagement platform called WoodsCamp. This outreach platform uses advertisements on social media to connect unengaged landowners with specific forest management resources based on their interest, goals, and forest resources. Landowners then connect with an AFF call agent and can request a visit from their FFS County Forester. Both the LMP and

WoodsCamp programs have served County Foresters in more efficiently meeting the needs of forest landowners and reaching a broader audience in Florida.

### ***Prescribed Burning Accomplishments on State Forests and Other Lands***

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, FFS was able to treat just over 200,000 acres of Florida state forests and Babcock Ranch Preserve with prescribed fire; which is up from the previous year despite COVID-19 impacting operations. During the past year, we were fortunate to experience many days with conditions favorable for prescribed fire which allowed FFS to issue prescribed fire authorizations for nearly 2.1 million additional acres of managed lands in the state. Prescribed fire is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk.

### ***Ready, Set, Go!***

The Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) program aims to teach individuals who live in high risk wildfire areas – and the wildland-urban interface (WUI) – how to best prepare themselves and their properties against wildfire threats. Its tenets help residents be Ready with preparedness understanding, be Set with situational awareness when fire threatens, and to Go, acting early when a fire starts. The FFS along with cooperating agency partners, has incorporated RSG throughout the state of Florida and continues to conduct door-to-door campaigns in communities around the state. This effort was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and slowed participation across the state. RSG is a collaborative process that has been effective in improving coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community.

### ***RESTORE***

During this past year, FFS has conducted hydrological restoration on two high priority basins on Tate's Hell State Forest. Work included installation of eleven low water crossings, two box culverts, ten standard culverts, four culvert replacements and seven ditch blocks. Additionally, four culverts were removed and road surface stabilization was completed on 24.6 miles of primary roads. Site preparation and vegetative management was conducted on 316 acres in preparation for reforestation in early 2021. FFS staff also worked this year on a RESTORE proposal focusing on enhancing private forest lands within important watersheds in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

### ***Urban and Community Forestry***

Florida's Urban and Community Forestry Programs offer support to non-profits, individuals and communities through outreach, instruction and technical assistance. Technical assistance is provided on a range of topics including tree planting, tree care, inventories, canopy assessments, staff education and urban forest management planning. Thirty-eight CFA foresters help residents and municipalities across Florida by encouraging stewardship, promoting practices for storm resiliency and educating residents about the value of our urban forests. The FFS is participating in a regional urban forestry economic impact analysis to follow up to a 2019 University of Florida study that found the urban forestry industry of Florida employs over 80,000 full and part-time jobs and, including multipliers, contributes \$8.40 billion to the Florida economy. One hundred fifty- seven communities participated in the TREE CITY USA program provided through the Arbor Day Foundation. The FFS continues to partner with the Arbor Day Foundation and local utilities to provide trees to residents through the Energy-Saving Trees program. The trees planted through Energy-Saving Trees have positively impacted our communities and over 23,000 trees have been planted around Florida homes to date. This is a valuable program with a need for continued support. FFS continued working with the Florida Urban Forestry Council, Florida Project Learning Tree, and Community Greening to promote urban forestry and proper arboriculture practices around the state of Florida.

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